United Nations S/PV.7977

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7977th meeting
Tuesday, 20 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-17659 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting. Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General; His excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; Mr. Michael Doran, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute; and His Excellency Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, member of The Elders.

Mr. Mladenov is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give Mr. Mladenov the floor.

Mr. Mladenov: Today I devote my regular briefing to the Security Council to reporting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) during the period from 25 March to 19 June. I will focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance peace.

Let me once again note that nothing in the report can be divorced from the broader context in which it is occurring — the half century of occupation, the stalled peace process, the lack of dialogue between the parties, as well as the continued illegal settlement activities, terror, violence and increased radicalization.

Allow me to note that this month's briefing coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan. Achieving a negotiated two-State outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that is based on Israeli security needs and the Palestinian right to sovereignty and statehood. Now is not the time to give up on that goal. Now is the time to create the conditions for a return to negotiations so as to resolve all final-status issues based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, mutual agreements and international law.

Resolution 2334 (2016), in paragraph 2, calls on Israel to take steps to

> "cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem".

No such steps were taken during the reporting period. In fact, since 24 March there has been a substantial increase in settlement-related announcements as compared with the previous reporting period, with plans for nearly 4,000 housing units moving forward and 2,000 tenders issued. The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law. Resolution 2334 (2016) states that the international community will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties themselves through negotiations.

Plans for approximately 3,200 units were advanced through the various stages of the planning process in 22 settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank. Those plans include 2,000 housing units in the major population centres of Ma'ale Adumim and Ariel, and over 800 units in Kerem Reim, Oranit and Beit El. One hundred units were advanced for the new settlement of Amihai, established in the eastern Shiloh Valley for the former residents of the Amona outpost, where the Israeli authorities also declared 241 acres as State land in the same zone. Both acts would further sever the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State, thereby solidifying a line of settlements dividing the northern and central West Bank. As construction on the new settlement began today, the Prime Minister stated that

> "There will never be a Government that is more pro-settlement than our Government".

Separately, tenders were issued for close to 2,000 housing units in four settlements close to the 1967 line — Alfei Menashe, Beitar Illit, Beit Arie and Kamer Shomron. Infrastructure tenders for the future construction of more than 200 settlement units in Kochav Yaakov, located between Ramallah and Jerusalem, were also re-issued. In East Jerusalem 770 housing units in the Gilo southern slopes reached the final approval stage, and building permits for more

than 360 housing units were granted in Ramat Shlomo, Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramot.

Meanwhile, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the reporting period witnessed a sharp decline in the number of demolished Palestinian-owned structures in Area C. Twenty-nine structures were demolished or seized — down from 149 in the previous reporting period. East Jerusalem saw a less pronounced decrease in demolished structures, from 49 to 32. However, the monthly average of demolitions in East Jerusalem since the beginning of 2017 remains at the same level as in 2016, when demolitions reached a 15-year record.

Allow me to turn to the problem of violence, which remains a hallmark of the conflict. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on all sides to refrain from such acts and undertake efforts to combat them. During the reporting period, the security situation on the ground remained relatively calm. No rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel, and the Israeli Defence Forces did not conduct any air strikes in Gaza.

However, according to OCHA, 17 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in various incidents, including reported terror attacks, clashes and military operations. One Israeli soldier was killed in a car-ramming attack on 6 April outside the Ofra settlement, to the north-east of Ramallah, and, on 16 June a policewoman was killed in a shooting and stabbing attack by Palestinian assailants in the vicinity of the Old City of Jerusalem. On 14 April, a British exchange student was killed by a Palestinian assailant in a stabbing attack in Jerusalem.

The Israeli security forces killed a Jordanian citizen reportedly involved in a stabbing incident in the Old City on 13 May, and a Palestinian fisherman off the coast of Gaza on 25 May. The reporting period also witnessed the shooting of two Palestinian men during protests at the fence along Gaza's northern border.

On 24 March, a senior Hamas military commander was assassinated by unknown assailants in Gaza City. That was followed by a lockdown of Gaza by Hamas in which the de facto authorities did not allow Palestinians or internationals to leave the Strip for several days. In April, Hamas executed six Palestinian men for alleged collaboration with Israel — an act that was condemned by the international community.

Settler-related violence continued during the reporting period, as well. According to OCHA, 31 incidents were documented, resulting in one Palestinian killed, 10 injured and damage to Palestinian property. Much of the violence has centred around the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar near Nablus — a recurrent source of violent actions against neighbouring villages in the past. Against the backdrop of Israeli security officials reportedly warning of the increased risk of another terror attack by Jewish extremists, like the one against the Dawabsheh family two years ago, a Rabbi from Yitzhar was indicted for incitement to violence against Palestinians, while a number of others were arrested.

In paragraph 7 of resolution 2334 (2016), the Council called on both parties

> "to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric"

and, in paragraph 6,

> "to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism".

Regrettably, such calls continued to go unanswered during the reporting period. Palestinian officials and media outlets affiliated with Fatah continued to commemorate the lives of perpetrators of past terror attacks against Israeli civilians. One community centre was recently named after a Palestinian woman who was involved in an attack in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were killed in Tel Aviv in 1978. UN-Women and Norway withdrew support from the organization.

Hamas leaders have also continued their deplorable practice of celebrating recent attacks against Israeli civilians as heroic, including the 1 April stabbing in Jerusalem's Old City in which two civilians were injured, and only a few hours following the complex attack at Damascus Gate last Friday, in which a policewoman was killed, Hamas was quick to praise "the three martyrs from today's heroic Jerusalem operation".

Some Israeli officials have also employed provocative rhetoric. Politicians have repeatedly declared that there will never be a Palestinian State, while pledging to take the idea of statehood "off the agenda". In a regrettable incident, an Israeli Minister spoke at an event attended by other members of the Knesset, celebrating the publication of a book promoting abhorrent views concerning Israel's Arab citizens. The book was condemned by the Anti-Defamation League

as dangerous and inhumane, and a number of the participants expressed regret at their attendance.

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the call by the Middle East Quartet on both parties to take affirmative steps to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. In May, Israel approved a number of positive measures to improve the Palestinian economy. Those included the 24-hour opening of the Allenby Bridge for a three-month period effective as of today, as well as extended operating hours at the Tarkumiya, Ephraim, Gilboa, Maccabim and Reihan crossing points and the construction of a vehicular crossing point at Eyal. Furthermore, the package envisions the development of an industrial zone that includes bonded warehouses and a natural gas and fuel terminal aimed, at enhancing Palestinian authority over trade and customs issues.

The measures also included the demarcation of approximately 4,000 acres of land in Area C, including next to three major Palestinian cities — Ramallah, Nablus and Tulkarem — in which the regulation of planning and zoning will undergo changes with potentially positive implications for Palestinian development.

The Palestinian and Israeli Finance Ministries held a number of meetings to discuss fiscal leakages, which is a critical issue given the Palestinian Authority's $800 million-financing gap. The parties have progressed in discussions on value-added tax clearance revenues. In early June, in accordance with the electricity agreement signed in September, Israel transferred $30 million to the Palestinian Authority in lieu of equalization levies and health stamps, and agreed to conduct monthly transfers in the future. In May, the Joint Water Committee held its first meeting in seven years.

During the reporting period, the situation in Gaza heightened intra-Palestinian tensions, thereby creating an increasingly dangerous humanitarian situation and raising serious concerns about the prospects of another conflict. By establishing an administrative committee to run civilian affairs, Hamas tightened its control of Gaza and further antagonized the legitimate Palestinian authorities, reducing the prospects for reconciliation. Meanwhile, a stand-off between Fatah and Hamas over the payment of taxes on fuel led to the shut down of the only power plant in Gaza, leaving residents with four hours of electricity per day. Basic services, including health facilities, water supply and wastewater management have almost ground to a halt, increasing the risk of health and environmental disasters. Today Gaza depends exclusively on Israeli electricity lines, which normally provide 60 per cent of supply, on Egypt and on a United Nations-managed emergency fuel operation that, given the funding available, will expire in two to three months.

On 15 May, the Palestinian Authority informed Israel that it would reduce its payment for the electricity supplied to Gaza by 30 per cent. One month later, Israel agreed to the Palestinian request. An initial 5 per cent reduction was implemented on 19 June, and further cuts are expected to have catastrophic consequences for Gaza's population.

Going beyond the scope of today's report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), once again, I would like to warn all parties that Gaza is a tinderbox. If and when it explodes, it will have devastating consequences for the population and derail all efforts at advancing peace. Two million Palestinians in Gaza can no longer be held hostage by divisions. They have lived under the control of Hamas for a decade. They have had to deal with crippling Israeli closures, Palestinian divisions and have lived through three devastating conflicts. Perpetuating that situation breeds radicalism and extremism. We have a collective responsibility to prevent that situation; we have a duty to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

Returning to resolution 2334 (2016), during the reporting period there were no developments related to Member States' distinguishing, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967. There were, however, continuing efforts by the international community to advance peace.

On 29 March in Jordan, at the Summit of the League of Arab States, Arab leaders committed to relaunching serious peace negotiations on the basis of a two-State solution, establishing a Palestinian State "on the lines of June 4, 1967 with its capital in East Jerusalem" and reaffirmed their commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. In May, on his first trip abroad, United States President Trump visited Israeli and Palestinian leaders and made clear that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is critical to combating the threat of violent extremism and terrorism. He expressed his personal commitment to helping both sides achieve a peace agreement that would begin the process of peace

throughout the region. The Secretary-General looks forward to working with the United States, Russia, the European Union and regional partners towards improving the environment for peacemaking, including by engaging with all sides to improve the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations on the reporting period.

First, once again, I must stress the urgency of addressing the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza. We must acknowledge the significant budget constraints the Palestinian Authority is currently facing and the need to support the Government in addressing them. However, all decisions must be taken with due consideration of their humanitarian impact. I therefore call on Palestinian leaders to urgently reach the necessary compromises that will return Gaza to the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities. Last month, I warned the Security Council that the crisis was leading us towards another conflict — a conflict that no one wants. I urge all parties to act before it is too late.

Secondly, the policy of continued illegal settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory contravenes resolution 2334 (2016). The large number of settlement-related activities documented during the reporting period undermine the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution.

Thirdly, the continuing terror attacks, violence and incitement remain a very serious concern to all. Leaders have a responsibility to implement measures demonstrating their commitment to combating violence and any acts of provocation and inflammatory rhetoric.

Fourthly, while Israeli initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy are positive steps forward, it remains to be seen whether or not they will significantly increase Palestinian civil authority, in line with Quartet recommendations and prior commitments between the parties.

In this symbolic month, it is time to turn the challenges of the past into opportunities for the future. As the Secretary-General recently stated,

> "The occupation has shaped the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. It has fuelled recurring cycles of violence and retribution. Its perpetuation is sending an unmistakable message to generations of Palestinians that their dream of statehood is destined to remain just that, a dream; and to Israelis that their desire for peace, security and regional recognition remains unattainable".

Every day that passes without peace is another day we neglect our collective responsibility to advance a meaningful strategy towards a negotiated two-State solution that meets the national and historic aspirations of both peoples. The United Nations will continue its determined engagement with the parties and all key stakeholders to achieve that objective.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now give the floor the Mr. Aboul-Gheit.

Mr. Aboul-Gheit (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and members of the Security Council for holding today's debate and for inviting me, as representative of the League of Arab States, to participate in the debate.

The truth is that I am deeply saddened as I speak before the Council today, exactly 50 years since the start of the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands in June 1967. I was a young Egyptian diplomat at the time, and in those 50 years, I have held many positions of responsibility. Unfortunately, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories continues without the occupying Power showing any genuine attempt at reaching an acceptable settlement that would end the conflict once and for all.

We note the number of lives and opportunities that have been lost, and the wounds that have worsened in the past 50 years. We are left only to wonder about the negative effects that the conflict has had on Arab societies — how it has depleted our energy and increased our problems, exhausted our ability to develop and caused volcanoes of anger to erupt inside so many of our Palestinian and Arab young people. That anger is then expressed in several ways — some of them so vile that they strip people of their humanity.

The Arab side was defeated in June 1967 by Israeli aggression against its lands and it continues to pay the price even now. Despite the fact that the 1973 war, which I also witnessed, ccreated a new landscape and military situation, Israelis continued to use any pretext to maintain control of Palestinian territories — that is in fact at the heart of the conflict. It has made a fair and permanent settlement extremely difficult. The

Palestinian people in particular find themselves in an extremely complicated situation. Unfortunately, after the occupation of the remaining 22 per cent of Palestinian territory under the British Mandate, they have no space that they can call their own independent State. It is an extraordinary situation that is unparalleled in modern history, but yet it has continued for half a century. Unfortunately, some Israelis continue to believe that this situation can continue for years and decades into the future.

A few months after the military operations in 1967, the Council adopted resolution 242 (1967), which rejects the occupation of the territories of others by force, as per the Charter of the United Nations. The resolution also created the basis for any acceptable settlement of this conflict, that is, the complete withdrawal by Israel from the occupied territories in return for normal, peaceful relations with Israel. That approach remains the only means to address the Palestinian issue. This logic is, in fact, what the Arab States adopted at the Summit of the League of Arab States in Beirut in 2002, in the form of the Arab Peace Initiative, which calls for the complete withdrawal by Israel and the settlement of all pending issues in return for complete and peaceful relations. That equation seems easy, acceptable and fair to everyone. It was supported by the entire international community, with the exception of Israel. To date, we have not heard of a single Israeli politician or official who has accepted the Initiative.

It is unfortunate that in return Israel presents only one alternative: continued occupation. We, in practice, have two modes of life, subjected to the authority of the Israeli State. In that alternative there is no Palestinian sovereignty over any territory. In that alternative the Palestinian Government is more like a municipal Government that manages the affairs of citizens under Israeli sovereignty. Unfortunately, Israel has buried the hope generated by the 1993 Oslo Accords. That hope has practically died, affirming the bitter reality in the West Bank and the open prison that is the Gaza Strip.

This painful reality is taking place before the eyes and ears of the world year after year. Despite how painful this reality is for the Palestinians, who are losing their lives and their time in checkpoints and behind the separation wall, this represents a complete condemnation of the international order, of which the Council is a great expression. We must all accept and admit that this system has failed after 50 years of occupation. It has failed to end this conflict, and I cannot deny that deep disappointment is overcoming the Palestinians due to the failure of the international system to support them and transform their dreams and aspirations into reality.

The peace treaties signed between Israel, on one side, with Egypt and with Jordan, on the other, represent hope and show us that peace is not impossible. These are beacons of light in the long dark tunnel of conflict and violence. There is no doubt that they have stood the test of time; and the fact that the parties to those treaties have held onto them show that they were based on a solid foundation.

Today, after countless rounds of secret and public negotiations, after sincere efforts from all parties to arrive at a fair settlement, and after numerous interim agreements, as well as detailed agreements signed during different rounds of negotiations that I have personally witnessed, after this long history of failure to end the conflict, I say that we must be honest with ourselves. All those plans and attempts did not succeed because they did not address the heart of the conflict. They have been concerned with creating interim settlements and arrangements that do not address the heart of the matter. Practically, this has only led to prolonged conflict.

The heart of the matter is the occupation of territories in 1967. No solution will be achieved without directly and decisively addressing this matter, based on the principle of land in return for peace. Any negotiations not based on this assumption will be doomed to fail.

Our long experience in addressing this complicated conflict drives us to speak honestly about previous failures and how we must not repeat them. We must immediately address the final settlement issue. I reiterate that the goal must be to address the details of a final settlement — which is the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict — most important of which are the borders, Jerusalem, security and refugees. In that regard, I would like to present to the Council the following points.

First, the relevant parties are, in general, unable to manage successful negotiations alone, without consistent and strong international support. If the two parties, the Israelis and the Palestinians, were to be left without international support, they would most likely be unable to achieve any settlement or agreement, particularly in light of the grave imbalance of power between the two parties. In that regard, I would like to

pay tribute to every State that has attempted throughout the history of this conflict to bring the viewpoints of the parties closer together. In particular I wish to mention the United States of America, the successive Governments of which have performed different roles that are significant. I hope that this positive engagement with the parties will continue in a balanced manner in order to achieve the desired settlement.

Secondly, any serious negotiation must have an agreed framework of reference. Without that, the negotiations will not succeed. That framework includes Council and General Assembly resolutions, the principle of land in return for peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative. That framework of reference must govern any negotiation process so that we do not engage in any random attempts or negotiations that go round in a vicious circle while achieving nothing.

Thirdly, the current Israeli Government is adopting a strategy that will render impossible the two-State solution. That Government is following a systematic plan of building settlements, choosing the locations of those settlements in a way that makes a viable Palestinian State of connected territories almost geographically impossible. We heard our friend Mr. Mladenov speak on this minutes ago. We may have heard the statement made by the Israeli Minister of Defence a few days ago in which he boasted that the number of building permits issued since the beginning of this year in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem was the highest since 1992. This year alone the Israeli Government has approved 8,354 new residential units, 3,066 of which, an unprecedented number, are slated for immediate construction. In 1967, there were 12,000 settlers; in 1996, 150,000; and today there are 400,000, in addition to another 200,000 in East Jerusalem.

This situation leaves no doubt as to the fact that the plan of and the approach adopted by the current Israeli leadership is a plan for settlement, not a plan for peace. Resolution 2334 (2016), of December 2016, which was adopted with unprecedented unanimity following a long-standing failure to address the conflict, was a step in the right direction on the path towards delegitimizing the Israeli settlements by bringing increased pressure to bear on Israel to change course. Other resolutions must follow suit, particularly in terms of requesting that the Secretary-General submit a report on its implementation every three months.

Fourthly, the Arab Peace Initiative offers Israel a historic opportunity to normalize relations not only with its Arab neighbours but also with Muslim nations. The Amman summit of 29 March 2017 reaffirmed this initiative as a strategic Arab choice. However, I am compelled here to reaffirm the position of the Arab Summit: that Israel cannot reap the benefits of peace before achieving peace.

Fifthly, Arab States have noted of late continuing efforts on the part of Israel, which remains, under all norms of international law, an occupying Power, to normalize its situation in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Most significant in this respect are Israel's efforts to become a member of the Security Council in 2019-2020. Israel is in consistent violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and, accordingly, it fails to meet the minimum conditions required to become a member of the Council. Accepting Israel as a member thereof would strike at the heart of the Council's credibility and give impetus to Israeli extremists and settlers. If Israel can normalize its international status so easily, what will induce it to engage in serious negotiations aimed at ending the conflict?

It is bewildering, really, that Israel can find the courage to submit its candidature for membership in the Council. It never misses an opportunity to weaken the credibility of the United Nations. We may have heard that a few days ago the Israeli Prime Minister called for the dismantling of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, accusing it of working against Israel. This is no surprise, because the Agency represents an international commitment to refugees. The Israeli Government is trying to bury this issue completely and erase it from the international agenda.

Sixthly, addressing the issues of the border, security, Jerusalem and refugees is the basis for an acceptable and lasting solution, but the current Israeli Government continues to excel at framing the most complicated issues as though it were trying to kill all prospects for peace, for example requiring the Palestinian side to accept what is called a Jewish Israeli State and providing a minimum level of security guarantees. It is absurd, really, for a Government whose members do not accept the Palestinian right to an independent State to require that the Palestinians accept its State as a condition for negotiations.

It is painful to recall that 50 years have passed since the occupation of the Arab territories. It is time to end the nightmare of occupation, which is the underlying cause of the increase in violence, radicalization and terrorism throughout our region. I have said for many years that violence and terrorism are the direct result of our failure to resolve the Palestinian issue.

The world needs us to arrive at a just and lasting solution to the conflict, in order to pave the way for peace and development and enable the Palestinians to regain their rights. The Security Council must uphold its responsibilities in this regard. I hope that it will be able to restore confidence and hope to the Palestinians and show them that the world will not abandon them and that they will not become forgotten statistics.

The Arab League is fully ready to work with the Council to achieve the long-desired peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Aboul-Gheit for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Doran.

Mr. Doran: It is an honour to appear before the Council today to discuss the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 war and the current state of Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

Permit me to focus my remarks on the key factors that prompted Israel to take control of the West Bank in 1967, and to discuss the continued significance of those factors today.

The 1967 crisis began with a lie. In May of that year, the Soviet Union falsely accused Israel of massing troops on the Syrian border. That lie gave Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser a pretext to overturn the status quo in Egyptian-Israeli relations. Reacting to the Soviets' false claim and recognizing that it was a green light from Moscow to heat up the Arab-Israeli conflict, Nasser demanded the immediate departure of the United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai Peninsula. He quickly massed the Egyptian military in the Sinai, closed the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and organized an anti-Israel coalition with Jordan and Syria.

Nasser knew full well that Israel would regard these steps as a casus belli. Indeed, his propaganda machine boasted that Egypt had given Israel no choice but to attack, and that, moreover, the destruction of the Jewish State was imminent, a theme that leaders around the Arab world, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, loudly echoed. Israel responded to this threat with a set of lightning attacks against Egypt, which prompted King Hussein of Jordan to open fire on Israel, a fateful decision that ended with the West Bank in Israel's hands. Make no mistake, however: from beginning to end, this was Nasser's war.

For all that the world has changed, Israel today still faces adversaries that operate according to the Nasserist playbook. The greatest of those adversaries is Iran, which has created an anti-status-quo coalition made up of itself, Syria, and their proxies, Hizbullah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, among others. Like Nasser's Egypt, Iran aspires to be the leading Power in the Middle East, a goal that it pursues in multiple theatres simultaneously, including the Arab-Israeli arena, where it openly advocates the destruction of Israel.

The Security Council should indeed work to advance Israeli-Palestinian relations, but, in doing so, it must avoid policies that work to the advantage of Iran and its proxies, or that allow the Palestinians to duck direct negotiations. In recent years, three prevailing fallacies have prevented the United Nations from fashioning policies that meet these needs.

The first of is the idea that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the core of the larger Arab-Israeli conflict and, moreover, a centre of gravity in regional politics. If Palestinian-Israeli relations were truly so influential, then we would expect the relations between Israel and the Arab States to fluctuate in accordance with changes in Palestinian-Israeli relations. Such a pattern is not, and never has been, discernable. While Jordan and Egypt have both found it wise to make peace with Israel, Syria has refused. No knowledgeable observer would ever suggest that it was the Palestinian factor that prompted Syria to reject peace. If Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas were to sign a peace agreement tomorrow, neither Syria — nor Iran, for that matter — would honour it.

This point is so self-evident that it hardly seems worth noting, yet in its discussions of regional peace and security the United Nations routinely accords Palestinian-Israeli relations a special status that hardly seems justified on the basis of objective observation. At the same time, it has paid comparatively little attention to, for example, Iran's arming, training and

equipping of Hizbullah in contravention of Security Council resolutions.

Iran, the Al-Assad regime and Hizbullah have exploited the fixation of the international community on Israel to deflect attention from their wider regional aspirations — aspirations that they are pursuing with particularly murderous consequences in Syria today. More people have died in Syria at their hands in the last six years than have died on both sides in the Arab-Zionist conflict from its inception in the 1920s until today. Many more people have been made homeless in Syria than were ever turned into refugees by the Arab-Israeli wars. If the United Nations had worked to deter Iran and its allies in the last five years, how many Syrian lives would have been saved, and how many families would have remained safe in their homes?

The second fallacy is the idea that Israeli settlements on the West Bank are the primary impediment to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The experience of the George W. Bush Administration, in which I served, taught us the opposite. It was a relatively easy matter for a President who is sympathetic to Israel's security concerns to convince the Israeli Government to limit territorial expansion of Israeli settlements. Early reports coming from the Trump Administration suggest that President Trump may have reached, or is in the process of reaching, a similar accommodation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Historically, however, it has proven much harder to convince the Palestinian Authority to cease its incitement of its own population, whether through the naming of squares after terrorists, encouraging anti-Israeli attacks, glorifying terrorism in children's textbooks, or paying Government compensation to terrorists and their families. The extensive resources that the United Nations and its Members contribute to the upkeep of the Palestinian Authority give them a right to insist that those funds be used to foster a culture of tolerance based on a vision of two States living side by side in peace.

The third fallacy is the idea that Israeli intransigence is the key stumbling block in Arab-Israeli relations, and that, therefore, Israeli concessions are the key factor that will create the conditions for a settlement. The Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005 should have dispelled this idea forever. Rather than having a calming effect, however, those withdrawals served only to increase the bloodlust of Hizbullah and Hamas.

The lesson was not lost on the Israelis. Any withdrawal from territory on the West Bank, therefore, must come with ironclad guarantees of Israeli security. Given the unsettled state of the region in general, the advances of the Iranian alliance in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, the persistence of Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and the split among the Palestinians between Hamas and Fatah, no Israeli Government could take severe risks with respect to Israeli security on the West Bank and still hope to remain in power.

Israelis are already intensely aware that in a very short period of time they might find themselves peering across the Golan Heights at Iranian soldiers ensconced in Syria. How can the world ask them to take steps that could potentially lead to the Iranian penetration of the West Bank as well?

Those three fallacies foster a general perspective that places an exaggerated importance on Israeli actions. It misinterprets the behaviour of Arab and Muslim actors as a reaction to the Jewish State rather than as a product of their own regional strategies and perceptions. It encourages the Security Council, unconsciously perhaps, to reward the Palestinian Authority's efforts to internationalize the conflict — to look to the United Nations to intercede on its behalf in negotiations with Israel.

This drift toward internationalization is fraught with danger. When the United Nations replaces the Palestinians as the interlocutor with Israel regarding the final status of the West Bank, it reduces the chances for peace, because it does nothing to allay the very real security concerns of Israel. A better path forward is to urge the Palestinians back to direct negotiations. While the likelihood that those negotiations will result in a quick resolution of the final status issues is small, there is reason to be optimistic about interim accommodations that are manifestly in the interests of both sides. The new willingness of Sunni Arab States, which share Israel's concerns about Iran, to support constructive solutions is especially heartening.

I would like again to remind the Security Council of the example of Gamal Abdel Nasser. A revisionist school of historiography claims that he never wanted war in 1967. His best military units were bogged down in Yemen, his economy was a shambles and his

relations with Jordan and Syria, his putative allies, were abysmal. Why would a leader in such a precarious position behave so recklessly?

The revisionists have much of the story correct, but they miss a crucial factor. Nasser was applying lessons that he had learned a decade earlier, during the Suez crisis. Then, as in 1967, he had precipitated a war that he could not possibly win militarily, but which he believed he could win politically, because, he gambled, the super-Powers and the United Nations would intercede on his behalf. In 1956, that proved a very smart bet. In 1967, however, it utterly failed — with disastrous consequences for Egypt — to say nothing of the Palestinians. How much better would it have been for all parties if, back in 1956, the United Nations had insisted that, in return for an Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory, Nasser must grant Israel meaningful security guarantees?

The key lesson of the 1967 war is that peace is best achieved not by United Nations intercession but by facilitating direct negotiations between the parties.

I thank the Council again for the honour of addressing it on this important issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have taken note of Mr. Doran's statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Brahimi.

Mr. Brahimi: I am deeply grateful to the President for his kind invitation. I am greatly honoured to be back in this Chamber, this time as a member of The Elders.

Our founder, Nelson Mandela, was passionate about Palestine. He spoke about it repeatedly and always forcefully. He discussed his views with Jewish leaders in South Africa and the United States, and he thought he had convinced some of them that his support for the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and freedom was politically and morally right. When he launched The Elders, he gave our group three priorities. Palestine was one of them. In response, The Elders visited Palestine and Israel four times in the past eight years. Neither Prime Minister Netanyahu nor any member of his Government has ever agreed to meet them. We fully share Mandela's view that the Palestinians should have their State, that the two States of Israel and Palestine should live side by side in peace and that the security of all States in the region should be assured. The sad reality, however, is that 50 years after the start of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, little of consequence has been done to bring about a viable Palestinian State on those territories.

I am sure that many Council members read Nathan Thrall's 2 June article in *The New York Times*. With regard to the ongoing occupation, he says that this

> "resilient and eminently sustainable arrangement has stood on three pillars: American backing, Palestinian weakness and Israeli indifference. Together, these three ensure that for the Israeli Government, continuing its occupation is far less costly than the concessions required to end it".

I believe that the article implies that there is a fourth pillar sustaining the situation, and that is the near-total paralysis of the Security Council. Which of those pillars might change in order to break the deadlock? Apparently, not America's unconditional support for Israel. Thrall says,

> "Americans are told that Israel will have to choose, and very soon, to give Palestinians either citizenship or independence, and choose to either remain a democracy or become an apartheid State. Yet none of these groups calls on the United States to force this supposed imminent choice, no matter how many times Israel demonstrates that it prefers a different, far easier option: continued occupation."

Since 1967, the Palestinian people have endured grave acts of oppression, violence and collective punishment. During that time, Israel has built approximately 125 settlements and more than 100 so-called outposts on occupied Palestinian land, all in violation of international law. They have placed roughly 650,000 illegal settlers in Palestine, with 350,000 in the West Bank and 300,000 in East Jerusalem. They have imprisoned 800,000 Palestinians and destroyed 48,000 homes. They have revoked the residence permits of 250,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza and more than 14,000 in East Jerusalem. The West Bank is fragmented by the separation wall and a multitude of other Israeli-imposed controls that affect Palestinian dignity and prevent the people from going about their normal business unhindered.

The Palestinian population is indeed extremely vulnerable and in desperate need of protection from the international community. That protection should be provided for under international law, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention. Regrettably, however, in the

Palestinian territories today the Geneva Conventions are referred to more in the breach than the observance. I would particularly like to draw the Council's attention to the dire situation in the Gaza Strip. There, another dismal milestone is being marked this year, the tenth anniversary of the imposition of a blockade that amounts to collective punishment of all of Gaza's 1.7 million people.

I have participated in only one of The Elders visits to Gaza, and that was in 2010. The misery in that unhappy, overcrowded strip of land is difficult to describe and more difficult to endure. A young woman student told us,

> "Israel put us in a concentration camp. Those who call themselves our leaders are taking away the air we breathe".

Only through the tireless efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme and other United Nations agencies, as well as persistent interventions by the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle Peace Process, are Gazans able to survive. But what kind of life is it for them — a densely crowded environment, half-destroyed cities, no work, undrinkable water, electricity available for only a few hours a day when it is available at all, and their basic humanity robbed by constant humiliation and the need to depend for survival on the charity of others? To add insult to injury, the irresponsible failure of the Palestinian leaders, especially those of Fatah and Hamas, to reconcile and unite is a huge hindrance both to the daily life of the people and to the struggle of civil society, prisoners and others to mobilize national, regional and international support for the fight against occupation.

Despite James Wolfensohn's personal commitment and commendable efforts, the Quartet achieved little before the appointment of Mr. Tony Blair, and since then has been totally absent. As I am sure the Council knows, many today think that the Quartet has outlived its usefulness. Nevertheless, there is a crying and urgent need for the Security Council to play an active role in that regard. The Council might wish to begin by organizing a visit of all its members to Israel and Palestine. Remarkably, considering the longevity of this issue on the Council's agenda, and the frequency of its visits to other conflict zones, there has been no field visit for many decades. On that trip, the members could take the opportunity to talk to all parties, but above all to civil-society representatives in Israel and Palestine. They could thereby see for themselves all the harm that has been done to the Palestinian people, as well as what the occupation is doing to the psychological and moral fibre of the men, women and children of both the occupying Power and the occupied people. In that connection, I would like to put on record The Elders appreciation for the work of the peace movement in Israel and its brave human rights defenders such as B'Tselem, Breaking the Silence, and the Israeli Committee against House Demolition, as well as the writings of such outstanding authors as Gideon Levy and Uri Avnery.

If the Council could make such a visit, its members would see how urgent it is to enforce the many binding resolutions that the Council has adopted since the June 1967 war, starting with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and including the most recent, resolution 2334 (2016), which focused on the illegality of settlement building. In that connection, is there any need to remind the Council that resolution 2334 (2016) is already being flouted? The recent Israeli Government decision to legalize the so-called outposts in the West Bank once again demonstrates its disregard for international law and the Council's decisions.

The not-so-discreet contacts of the Israeli Government with some countries in the region cannot be a substitute for peace with the Palestinians. Only a genuine, just solution to the Palestinian problem will open the way to lasting peace and cooperation between Israel and all its neighbours.

The Arab Peace Initiative provides a sound basis for that to happen. Issued at the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002, the Initiative has been ignored by the Israeli Government all these years. Unanimously, Arab countries called on Israel and all Israelis

> "to accept this Initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighbourliness and provide future generations with security, stability and prosperity."

Israeli politicians of the left and of the right and the media in Israel and civil society routinely speak of the danger of apartheid. Some warn that their country may become an apartheid State; others denounce practices that are already creating an apartheid system. Be that as

it may, Palestinians have rights. They have individual rights like all human beings and they have collective rights like any other people in the world. And they have the right to fight for their rights with all the legitimate means available to them.

The Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law, as well as all norms of international solidarity, call for effective support to be given to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation and oppression. Such support will in fact help liberate both Palestine and Israel.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I sincerely thank Mr. Brahimi, member of The Elders, for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank all of our briefers who spoke with us today.

First, the United States condemns in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack last week in Jerusalem. This stabbing attack left one Israeli border guard dead and wounded several others. We express our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. The United States reiterates its commitment to stand with Israel against these forces of terror.

Hamas is one of those forces of terror, which yet again showed its true colours to the world earlier this month. It is a terrorist organization so ruthless that it will not hesitate to put the lives of innocent children on the line. A few weeks ago, United Nations officials discovered a tunnel underneath two schools run by the United Nations in Gaza. It was the exact type of tunnel that Hamas has used for years. Those tunnels are what Hamas uses to smuggle in the materials they need to make rockets or to sneak into Israel to attack civilians or kidnap them in the dead of night. Imagine children playing in their schoolyard while Hamas moves explosives underneath their feet. Imagine children trying to learn while a few feet below terrorists might have been crawling towards Israel. All of this was happening under a building flying a flag of the United Nations. It is an outrage.

But when we consider Hamas and the other terrorist organizations that operate in Gaza, the existence of that tunnel should not be a surprise. This is the way Hamas does business. Tunnels in heavily populated civilian areas are its signature. Hamas hides military infrastructure in and around apartment buildings, hospitals and, as we saw again this month, United Nations compounds. In this way, Hamas consciously plots and plans to attack civilians and it uses the cover of civilian buildings to launch those attacks. It is a sick and cynical strategy.

There is a terrible humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We remain a strong supporter of Gaza's recovery and reconstruction. I myself was at the Gaza border earlier this month, where Special Coordinator Mladenov briefed me on the latest chilling developments. What is happening to the people of Gaza is heartbreaking, and it is so preventable. Gaza is prime real estate on the Mediterranean Sea. It has enormous potential, but the potential is being squandered by the terrorists who govern it.

Make no mistake: Israel did not cause the problems in Gaza, even though it is often the usual suspect around here. Ten years ago every Israeli soldier was withdrawn from Gaza, and for the past 10 years, there has not been a single Israeli settler in Gaza. Other outside countries and political factions are also not the cause of Gaza's problems. We all would like to see Palestinians in Gaza receive the aid they so desperately need, and we will continue to work to find avenues to get aid safely to them. But we should never forget that the responsibility for this humanitarian crisis rests squarely with the one group that actually controls Gaza: Hamas.

Hamas has exercised control over Gaza since 2007. After 10 years of Hamas rule, life for the people of Gaza is worse than ever before. Rather than govern, Hamas chooses to devote its resources to building a terrorist arsenal. Rather than pursuing peace, Hamas chooses to provoke destructive wars. Rather than allowing help to reach the Palestinian people, Hamas chooses to divert untold amounts of aid to feed its military enterprise.

I saw how this works firsthand. I walked through one of the terrorist tunnels coming out of the Gaza Strip, which Israel discovered and has since secured. The top and sides of the tunnel were lined with solid, sturdy concrete. We know how badly Palestinians in Gaza need concrete to rebuild their homes. But there, in that tunnel, we see how Hamas uses the concrete Gaza receives — not to help the people, but to fortify its terrorist infrastructure. Hamas remains a terrorist organization bent on Israel's destruction. Its goal is to defeat Israel by force. It will use all the resources it can to continue the fight.

The Security Council must stand up to condemn Hamas' terror. Hamas represents yet another regional threat that the Council far too often ignores. While United Nations agencies and Member States dissect Israel's actions, few speak out against the terror that Hamas continues to plot. Some States Members of the Organization even maintain ties to Hamas and other terrorist groups that flourish in Gaza.

The Security Council must unite to say that enough is enough. We need to pressure Hamas to end its tyranny over the people of Gaza. We should condemn Hamas in the Council's resolutions and statements. We should name Hamas as the group responsible when rockets are fired from Gaza or when fresh tunnels are discovered. And we should designate Hamas as a terrorist organization in a resolution, with consequences for anyone who continues to support it. That is how we can help build a more peaceful Middle East, and how we can fulfil our responsibility on the Council to actually maintain international peace and security. And while we must do whatever we can to ease the suffering of the people in Gaza, we must also recognize that the suffering will not be fully addressed until the terrorists lose their grip on power.

All States have a role to play here. We must do much more to show Hamas that we will never tolerate terrorism. We must show that when Hamas uses homes and schools to hide its terrorist infrastructure, there will be consequences. Those who give Hamas the arms, money and political support to operate must cease. And if they do not, Member States of the United Nations need to come together to put real pressure on supporters of Hamas to stop. Together, we can show Hamas that their terrorist tactics will lead only to more isolation. Together, we can show Hamas that their terrorist tactics will fail. We should act now, before Hamas puts the people of Gaza at risk again by building more tunnels under their feet.

I want to conclude by saying that I spent a lot of time in Israel and also in Palestinian areas. I spoke with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I went to schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. I went to every border of Israel. I saw the threats. There are threats that completely surround Israel from every single side.

The Council can go and do what it always does — pick a side, bashing either Israel or the Palestinian Authority. That will get us nowhere. But anyone who has seen what I saw — the current terrorist activity in that area — would understand that every ounce of what we say in the Council, pitting the two sides against each other, is only strengthening the terrorists. Every ounce of what we do should combat Hamas. They are a dangerous actor that has no care for the Palestinians, no care for the Israelis, and is determined to destroy everything in their path.

Once again, we are having this meeting, and once again we will hear speeches on whether a country is for Israel, against Israel, for Palestinians or against Palestinians. But I would ask that each country address the real threat that is causing so many people harm — the threat of Hamas.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I join others in welcoming our briefers this morning and I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mladenov for his second report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and for all his tireless work.

As each briefer made clear, the Middle East continues to face an unrelenting human tragedy of multiple conflicts and rising tensions. For many in the region, it is a tragedy that has gone on for over half a century. We recognize that the anniversary of the Six-Day War holds great significance for all sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For Israelis, it marks the anniversary of a war from which Israel emerged victorious against all the odds. For Palestinians, it marks an enduring tragedy of 50 years of occupation, 50 years without self-determination.

Let us be clear: half a century of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza is a tragedy for all sides — a tragedy for Palestinians, who yearn for independence, and a tragedy for Israelis, who yearn for peace and security. It is a tragedy that has been exploited, with terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hizbullah cynically manipulating the narrative of occupation for their own ends.

So many decades of violence, loss, anger and hate only prove that conflicts cannot be managed or contained in perpetuity. This year we must move towards peace, with the support of the region and the international community, rather than towards an uncertain and dangerous future. Support for a two-State solution is the only way to ensure a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If we are to make that a reality, it is incumbent upon both sides

to refrain from any steps that damage the prospects of a two-State solution.

That means the people of Israel must live free from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-State solution. We condemn the horrific murder of Hadas Malka, a 23-year-old Israeli policewoman last Friday. We condemn the recent discovery of part of a tunnel passing under two United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools in Gaza. We call on Hamas to renounce violence and dismantle its tunnel network. They cannot be allowed to pose a threat to Israel's security.

If the two-State solution is to become a reality, it also must mean Israel refraining from further settlement expansion. Only last week, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary condemned Israel's latest announcement to build over 3,000 settlement units throughout the West Bank. The number of units planned for construction this year is now at its highest in a quarter of a century. Those moves undermine the physical viability of two States for two peoples.

Despite those challenges, the United Kingdom's long-standing position on the Middle East peace process remains clear and unchanged. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian State based on 1967 borders — with agreed land swaps, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

But that vision has proved elusive for far too long. The changing regional context in converging Arab and Israeli interests presents a unique opening to develop Arab-Israeli relations and create the conditions for serious Israeli-Palestinian talks to resume. With that in mind, we welcome the reaffirmation of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States of the Arab Peace Initiative here today. We must support the leadership and engagement that President Trump and his Administration have demonstrated in reinvigorating the Middle East peace process.

We call on the region, Israelis and Palestinians to seize the opportunity that this presents and turn 2017 not just into another anniversary of occupation but a new anniversary of peace. We cannot afford to fail. As Special Coordinator Mladenov made clear, there is an urgent need to address the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza with over 65,000 people currently displaced.

The ongoing energy crisis is particularly concerning. Energy supplying Gaza will soon fall to just three hours per day. That is having a serious humanitarian impact, disrupting basic services, including water treatment and essential medical operations. This latest crisis underlines the need for de-escalation, dialogue and a durable agreement between Palestinian actors that results in the Palestinian Authority's full control over the Gaza Strip.

Before I conclude, let me turn briefly to the situation in Lebanon. We welcome the new electoral law, ratified by the Lebanese Parliament on 16 June. It is an important milestone towards continued governance and stability, which paves the way for new elections. But we must not forget the importance of ensuring stability flowing across the whole of Lebanon. In that regard, we are concerned about the increase in Hizbullah rhetoric along Lebanon's southern border and we call on both sides to abide by resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). Renewed conflict is in neither side's interest. We call on all actors to take steps to de-escalate tensions.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank all of the briefers for their contributions this morning, particularly the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, and I assure him of the full support of Uruguay in carrying out his work.

Uruguay welcomes the presentation of the second report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We regret that there is no accompanying written report, as it contains a great deal of information that requires a careful reading. As such, we must now wait two or three days for the oral version to be transcribed into the Security Council meetings records. We do not understand why no written report was submitted and why we must wait for the records to be published.

Fifty years of war. Fifty years marred by violence, serious military clashes, terrorist attacks, abductions, killings and the death of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, as well as the suffering of millions. The roots of this conflict stretch far back into the pages of history. The people's hopes of living in peace and security were dashed by inequality, lack of opportunities, intolerance and mutual accusations in which one side is always right and acts properly and the other side is wrong and acts perversely.

Thus, tensions mounted every few years and clashes resulted in maximum destruction and death. Until one day, perhaps exhausted by the pointless shedding of so much blood and having understood that they could continue for years without either party emerging victorious, they had the courage to cease hostilities, sit down for talks and opt for peace.

It is clear that I am talking about the peace process in Colombia. Members will ask why I am referring today to Colombia. The answer is simple. Colombia best exemplifies that peace can be achieved after a long conflict if the parties involved show a real and firm commitment to negotiate and reach an agreement and have the courage to risk everything so as to abide by the agreement.

The Peace Agreement in Colombia sent a powerful message of hope throughout the world at a time when numerous armed conflicts continued to take place, including one of the most prolonged and complex of them, which has confronted Israel and Palestine for the past 70 years.

The United Nations and the Security Council have stood witness to the conflict between Israel and Palestine since its inception. For seven decades, unilateral, regional and multilateral efforts have been made to advance peace in the Middle East. There have been moments of real hope and milestones, such as the Oslo Accords, the Quartet's road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, among others, whereby it seems that the progress achieved is rapidly dissolved by the decisions and actions of one or both parties, thereby heightening tensions and only encouraging the most extremist positions.

Regrettably, for years, we have witnessed an unsustainable situation that risks voiding efforts made thus far to achieve peace. In that context, six months ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), aimed at stabilizing and reversing negative trends on the ground that jeopardize the prospects of peace and the two-State solution. It was a clear demonstration of the importance that the international community places on the peaceful and successful conclusion of this process. Despite that, to date, Israel has stepped up its announcements to continue its settlement policy in the occupied territories, which flouts that resolution and resolution 242 (1967), which affirms that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible.

Similarly, the continuation of violent incidents and terrorist attacks, the silence of complicity, the lack of censure and punishment in connection with their incitement and glorification and the incomprehensible policy of financially compensating the families of prisoners or those who die in the commission of such acts does not in any way advance peace by seriously placing in jeopardy the possibility of achieving the two-State solution. Uruguay has condemned and will continue to condemn such acts vigorously.

Together with the overwhelming majority of the international community, Uruguay strongly supports the solution of two independent States and is convinced that that is the only option that will lead to the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine. For that to happen, the parties will have to facilitate conditions for finding a negotiated settlement that is mutually acceptable and resolves pending issues related to the conflict.

As we have done unequivocally since 1947, we once again reaffirm our unconditional support for the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace, within secure and recognized borders and in an atmosphere of renewed cooperation, free of any threats or actions that would jeopardize peace.

It is essential to reverse current trends on the ground that will make establishing a Palestinian State extremely difficult. It is also necessary that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities fulfil their obligations under international law and pursuant to the Council's resolutions and send a clear political message so as to break free from the vicious cycle of mutual mistrust.

After the 70 years during which Israel established itself as an integrated and modern State and a full Member of the Organization, Palestine continues to face serious difficulties in connection with its development, international integration and consolidation of its territory, which entail serious repercussions for its people and increased tensions in the entire region.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation of territories, which constitutes a clear violation of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Council, has also contributed to causing a serious humanitarian situation for the Palestinians remaining in those territories and for those seeking refuge in other countries of the region. That is a historical injustice that must be righted by the parties with the support of international community and the Council.

Uruguay welcomes all international, regional and unilateral initiatives that will allow for progress in the quest for solutions in the peace process in the Middle East so as to achieve a peaceful, fair, negotiated and lasting solution in line with international law, thereby enshrining the legitimate aspirations of both parties. We continue to call on both parties to resume direct bilateral negotiations as soon as possible without preconditions as an essential step towards achieving peace and the two-State solution — a goal shared by the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians and denied to them thus far by their leaders.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Coordinator Mladenov for his video briefing. I also thank Secretary-General Aboul-Gheit, Mr. Brahimi and Mr. Doran for their presence and briefings.

The question of Palestine has dragged on for years and has defied resolutions owing to its complexity. Palestine and Israel have been neighbours for ever, and their lots are closely linked. They in effect share a common destiny. Only by resolving disputes and differences through dialogue and consultations and turning their swords into ploughshares will they be able to find an answer to the Palestinian question and the more fundamental issues concerning the Middle East.

The international community should act with a renewed sense of urgency and collectively shoulder the responsibility of defending the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people. There is an urgent need for both sides to exercise restraint and take concrete actions to resume peace talks without delay so as to realize the two-State solution as soon as possible.

First, an independent State of Palestine and the peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel is the correct path for the efforts of the international community. The establishment of a fully sovereign State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people, as well as the key to resolving the Palestinian question. Based on the principle of land-for-peace, the two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions, all parties should determinedly promote the peace process.

Secondly, both sides should continue to demonstrate good will and resume talks without delay in line with the interests of the two peoples. Both sides should effectively implement resolution 2334 (2016) and, in both words and actions, demonstrate their sincerity to return to peace talks and rebuild trust. Violence directed against innocent civilians must stop. Israel should cease its settlement expansion and its closure of the Gaza Strip, and, at the same time, step up efforts to improve the livelihoods of the Palestinian people.

Thirdly, the international community should build consensus and synergy, which are an indispensable external condition for resolving the Palestinian issue. China welcomes the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and countries with influence as they play a greater role and step up their efforts with both parties to consolidate the will for peace talks and build momentum. The leading role of the United Nations should be brought into full play and any results of such efforts should be endorsed by the Security Council.

China supports all international efforts aimed at promoting peace between Palestine and Israel. Recently, the relevant parties engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote the resumption of talks. We hope that both parties will continue their positive response in order to relaunch negotiations at an early date. China is a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people and an active mediator for peace between Palestine and Israel. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal for resolving the Palestinian issue. In 2016, Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed three steps and deadlines for relaunching the peace process. China's Special Envoy on the Middle East Issue recently visited Palestine and Israel to encourage both sides to meet each other halfway. China is ready to step up its efforts with all relevant parties to promote an early, comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli issue so as to realize peace and stability in the Middle East.

Today, 20 June, is World Refugee Day. The international community should not forget the plight of millions of Palestinian refugees and should continue to provide humanitarian assistance to them. We commend and support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and laud the refugee-receiving countries on their contributions. China will continue to provide assistance to Palestine, including by helping Palestine to achieve social and economic development under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Mladenov,

Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General; His Excellency Mr. Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, member of The Elders, for their detailed briefings.

The fiftieth anniversary of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip occurs at a time of turbulent transformation of the Middle East and North Africa. Russia condemns terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. We are outraged and express our condolences to all who have fallen victim to such heinous crimes.

With the rise of international terrorism to the centre stage of global affairs as the main threat, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been unfairly pushed into the background. In that adverse context, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to deepen. The two-State prospect is waning. Rather than addressing it, destabilizing factors fraught with risk of escalation have only worsened. They now loom large over Gaza. The absence of a political horizon is due to a chronic stalemate in the peace process. It has reinforced a sense of despair for the average person, first and foremost in Palestine. As a consequence, radicals have been given additional room for manoeuvre.

Russia's position on the Middle East conflict has remained guided by principle and consistency. We firmly believe that a just solution to the Palestinian problem is of key importance for improving the situation in the entire region. If not solved, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine will continue to taint international affairs, frustrate efforts to settle other regional crises and fuel terrorism. In that regard, we advocate a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of international law. That includes Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, which was just affirmed by His Excellency Mr. Aboul-Gheit.

We are sure that a lasting solution to the conflict can be found through direct talks between sides, without preconditions. Such talks should lead to an end to Israel's occupation of Arab land that began in 1967. They should lead to the creation of an independent, viable Palestinian State with contiguous borders, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within safe and recognized borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital and West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We see no alternative to the two-State solution. We believe that it is the only realistic manner in which to halt the face-off between Israel and Palestine and the claims they levy against each another. We call upon Palestinians and Israelis to refrain from using violence and unilateral actions that might skew the outcome of the peace process. That pertains to the building of Israeli settlements on occupied Palnestinian territory. We are sure that, more than ever today, there is a need to take practical steps to break the dangerous deadlock in the peace process.

To that end, we continue to make efforts to bring about the resumption of direct political dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, bilaterally and in other formats. Our initiative to convene a meeting between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu in Moscow remains on the table. We would like to see a speedy resumption of activity from the Middle East Quartet of international mediators. Let us not forget about the issue of inter-Palestinian divisions. Regrettably, such divisions are also at their 10-year mark. Effectively overcoming divisions on the basis of the political platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative is in line with the national interests of all Palestinians and will serve to improve the situation in Gaza and create a sound basis for the success of a future political process.

Russia is making its contribution to reinstating Palestinian unity and notes the efforts of other States, in particular the Arab Republic of Egypt.

We would like to call the attention of the Security Council to the fact that the destabilization of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa has a most serious impact on the Christians living there and on other religious and ethnic minorities. Extremists draw upon ethnic and religious factors to incite hatred and fill their own ranks. Russia continues its efforts to curb attacks on Christians and other minorities, as well as to prevent the fragmentation of civilizations and religions. That is the very lens through which we should consider the joint statement of February last year issued by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Rus' and Pope Francis in Havana. It was an appeal to take swift steps to halt the mass exodus of Christians from Middle Eastern countries. That was also the goal of the 7 April Tashkent joint statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States, with regard to the inadmissibility of discrimination and

intolerance against Christians, Muslims and membersof other religions.

History has many nuances but one thing remains clear. We established the Security Council to bring Member States together, not divide them. Today's review of the situation in the Middle East underscores an indisputable fact — resolving the numerous problems, new and old, in this long-suffering region is possible only through political and diplomatic means and collective efforts. A choice must be made for dialogue and engagement, rather than isolation and animosity. We think that pooling cooperation between the Security Council and the League of Arab States would serve this cause. The joint meeting between the Security Council and the League of Arab States in Cairo in May 2016 created a necessary foundation for these endeavours. However, we must realize that the situation in the Middle East can be improved only with the formation of a broad front of States working to suppress the terrorist threat. Today the relevant initiative — presented by the President of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin, to the General Assembly in September 2015 (see A/70/PV.13) — is gaining even more relevance. Russia stands ready to engage in collective work, and it is in constant contact with all States of the region.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We express our appreciation to the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Mladenov, for his comprehensive and objective briefing. We also thank all the invited briefers for their thoughtful and important contribution to this significant issue.

As we continue to witness unprecedented, grave crises in the Middle East, which have been a major destabilizing factor in global security for five decades, we believe that now is the time to seriously address those issues. Kazakhstan's position on the Middle East process is crystal clear and remains unchanged. We support negotiations that would result in a two-State solution and call for the prompt resumption of such negotiations, especially in the bilateral format, without preconditions. The ultimate goal should be the restoration and promotion of the peace process, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1067) and 338 (1973), the Madrid principles, the land for peace formula and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that the Security Council and individual United Nations institutions should work together to develop a new, more detailed road map reflecting the demands and wishes of Israelis and Palestinians. Such a road map could help to facilitate direct talks between the sides. There should be a stop to settlement enlargement on the Palestinian territories, which could lead to a new cycle of violence that nobody wants.

My country underscores the importance of achieving inter-Palestinian unity. There should be a unified Palestinian voice in negotiations with Israel and the international community. The difficult humanitarian situation in the region, which includes, inter alia, extreme poverty, growing unemployment and the chronic economic backwardness of Gaza, contributes to instability and frustration, which can, in turn, create conditions that lead to the resumption of the conflict. Kazakhstan is particularly concerned about the gravity of the Palestinian situation and calls for urgent international action to mitigate suffering. The blockades and checkpoints imposed on Gaza only aggravate the social, economic and humanitarian situation and diminish the prospects for peace.

We welcome and support Israel's decision to provide some economic concessions to the Palestinians to facilitate and ease the conditions of daily living in the territory of the Palestinian Authority.

Finally, Kazakhstan is convinced that the efforts of the co-sponsors of the peace process, international and regional organizations, as well as the good will of all sides and actors in the negotiating process, should bring a political solution to the Middle East.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would also like to thank the briefers for their informative briefings.

I appreciate Mr. Mladenov's briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), which deals with prominent obstacles to achieving just and sustainable peace in the region. I would like to stress that the resolution must be taken as a whole, and all efforts must contribute to the re-launching of political dialogue, which is a fundamental method of conflict resolution.

Japan continues to support a two-State solution based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps, in a way that will achieve the peaceful co-existence of a viable Palestinian State and Israel within secure and recognized borders. The obstacles mentioned in the resolution continue to exist and hamper the peace process. In the last three months, we heard announcements of

the building of a new settlement, and the expansion of housing units within existing settlements in the West Bank. Japan remains firm in its position that settlement activities are in violation of international law, and has repeatedly called upon the Government of Israel to fully freeze settlement activities.

Cases of violence, such as the shooting and stabbing attack in the vicinity of the Old City of Jerusalem last week, cannot be justified for any reason. Such attacks intensify the cycle of violence, and Japan is concerned about the further cases of violence that followed. Japan condemns all acts of violence and rejects incitement and the glorification of violence, as they are fundamentally incompatible with a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In that regard, Japan is increasingly concerned about the deteriorating situation in Gaza, which was mentioned by Mr. Mladenov in his briefing. Extreme power shortages in Gaza are affecting every aspect of human life, including health, water, sanitation and municipal services. Desperation and frustration felt on the ground may cause a further unstable security situation, and the risk is increasing as we speak today. The crisis points to the importance of promoting reconciliation among the Palestinians. Furthermore, it points to the importance of working towards easing and eventually lifting the Gaza blockade, while duly taking security concerns into account.

Japan, for its part, has provided economic assistance worth $34 million to Palestine so far this year, half of which is used to assist the livelihood of the people of Gaza. Resolution 2334 (2016) also calls upon the parties to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on final-status issues. Japan appreciates the efforts made by various parties to promote dialogue between the parties. We are especially encouraged by the dialogue between the United States and the relevant parties at the highest levels, and believe that it is essential to promoting the peace process.

Japan is contributing to confidence-building efforts between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which will form the basis for credible negotiations. The Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary, currently hosts six Palestinian firms, creating jobs on the ground. This was only possible because of cooperation among Japan, Israel, Palestine and Jordan. Through cooperation, mutual trust is fostered and the know-how of economic development is gained. There is potential to enhance the collaborative nature of the project. We are currently encouraging other States to visit the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park and to consider the participation of private-sector firms in the project.

Fifty years of occupation and nearly 70 years of unresolved conflict should remind all of us of the heavy cost incurred in the region and of the opportunities that were missed. Japan reiterates that peace would unlock new political, economic, security and cultural opportunities, to the benefit of the region and beyond. To that end, Japan will continue its engagement through political dialogue with the parties, confidence-building in the region and economic assistance to the Palestinians.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit; the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov; and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi for their briefings and for their tireless efforts striving for peace. I also thank Mr. Michael Doran for sharing his perspective with the Council today.

This month marks 50 years since the 1967 Six-Day War, which resulted in the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan. Since then, the Palestinian question has rarely been far from the top of the Council's agenda, with the Council, in successive resolutions, calling for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East that includes the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories.

The hardships faced by generations of Palestinians during the Israeli occupation are numerous, not least for those forced to leave their homes to seek refuge elsewhere. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has supported Palestinian refugees since 1950, now faces a chronically difficult financial situation. As a major donor to the Agency, Sweden fully supports the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's recent report on sustainable funding. To mobilize the much-needed political and financial support, we look forward to hosting a high-level meeting, together with Jordan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, on 21 September during this year's session of the General Assembly.

Today I would like to make three points on what we believe is needed now to move forward.

First, the international community remains clear in its stance on the occupation and the need for a two-State solution. But we must act before it is too late; otherwise, the solution that the Council is striving for — two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security — will move beyond our reach, resulting in a one-State reality and perpetual occupation.

A renewed peace effort between Israelis and Palestinians is needed. After decades of violence and suffering that has affected both sides, this anniversary reminds us that the parties alone are not able to resolve the conflict. Together with the Israelis and Palestinians, the international community and the Council have a responsibility to remain engaged to end the occupation and achieve peace.

The United States has always played a leading role in efforts to resolve the conflict. United States leadership to revive the peace process is key, and we welcome the efforts made by the United States Administration in this regard.

Regional partners also have a key role to play. The Arab Peace Initiative, as Secretary-General Aboul-Gheit has outlined today, is essential. Any regional effort should build on this initiative, as it could contribute to a new dynamic benefiting all actors.

The support and active engagement of the people directly affected, particularly the youth of Israel and Palestine, is also much needed. Generations have grown up shaped by recurring cycles of violence and retribution. People-to-people contacts are now at a record low. Sweden, actively engaged with civil society in both Israel and Palestine, calls for a re-engagement with young people, in line with resolution 2250 (2015), and the revival of a public debate on the prospects for peace and a two-State solution. We must show the post-Oslo generation that there is an alternative to violence and occupation; after all, it is their future that is at stake. The purpose of Sweden's recognition of Palestine was to contribute to making the parties less unequal and to give hope and belief in the future to young Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is deteriorating by the day. The civilian population, particularly women and children, is bearing the brunt of the suffering. The decision of the Israeli Government, with the consent of the Palestinian Authority, to further reduce electricity supplies to Gaza is adding to the suffering and risks, leading to a dangerous escalation. A new conflict in Gaza would be in no one's interest, and we must prevent it from happening. We continue to call on all Palestinian factions to engage, in good faith, in a reconciliation process leading to a unified Palestinian leadership and a reunification of Gaza with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Thirdly, we welcome the Secretary-General's quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). The resolution contains clear messages to both parties, and both parties have a duty to implement its provisions, including by ensuring accountability for acts of violence against civilians. The continued construction and expansion of settlements as well as violence and acts of provocation will, if not reversed, render the two-State solution impossible.

It is therefore vital that the issue of settlements be addressed without delay. As clearly stated by the Council, settlements in occupied territory constitute a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution. Furthermore, in resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities.

The recent Israeli announcement of the construction of 3,000 new settlement units is worrying and contradicts Israel's commitment to the two-State solution. In line with resolution 2334 (2016), we also call on all States to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied in 1967 in their dealings.

Ending the occupation will improve the lives of both Israelis and Palestinians as well as contribute to wider peace and security in the region. This must be our common goal. The Council must stand ready to assist, and we must spare no effort.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you and your country for your initiative of holding a meeting of the Security Council to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of Arab territory, particularly Palestinian and Syrian territory. I thank Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, with whom I have had the honour and privilege of working here in the United Nations in a previous capacity, and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi for the very comprehensive briefings they delivered to the Council.

Today's meeting indeed represents an important fresh appeal for peace in the Middle East based primarily on resolving the core issue in the region, that is, the Palestinian question. Our discussions today have served to remind the world of the outlines for a resolution to this issue, in particular the need to put an end to the longest-standing occupation in the modern history of humankind, an occupation that began on 5 June 1967.

The sheer length of the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the decades-long absence of justice for the Palestinian people has led many to doubt the effectiveness of the international Organization, the international system as a whole and the Security Council in preserving and upholding the rights enshrined in the Charter of this House, as well as to deliver on the purposes that led to the creation of the United Nations, that is, the right of peoples to self-determination.

Some are questioning the effectiveness of addressing this issue within the United Nations going forward, saying that this hinders prospects for a genuine resolution or represents an attempt to impose a fait accompli on certain parties. We reiterate that the actions of the United Nations, including the Security Council, have never, since the very outbreak of the crisis, had the purpose of acting as an aggressor against, isolating or besieging a State or of detracting from its legality. Rather, the goal has been to complement the efforts made by the Organization for the past 70 years, since it decided to establish two States: Israel, which has been duly established, and the second, which we hope will soon enjoy full sovereignty over its own territory.

We have never asked the United Nations to, or hoped that it would, impose a solution, which would be unrealistic and impossible. We remain convinced that negotiations remain the best means of bringing about a just and lasting peace in the region.

Until a peace agreement is reached, our international Organization must remain the key organ with respect to, and the legitimate guarantor of, the inalienable legal rights of the Palestinian people and the parameters for the hoped-for negotiations.

Against that backdrop, we would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his very comprehensive briefing this morning. We would also like to thank him for having presented the second report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), and his comments on the resolution's provisions and parameters. We have followed very closely and with a great deal of interest the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) and we would call upon both parties — once again, the Palestinian and Israeli sides — to listen very carefully to Mr. Mladenov, to be guided by him, to implement the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016) and to refrain from any unilateral measures, in particular the current unprecedented and illegal settlement activity we are seeing in the occupied Palestinian territory, which risks the prospects for the two-State solution. We would also recall the various Security Council resolutions that set out the key parameters agreed by the international community, in particular the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

We thank all those who are working on the humanitarian track to try mitigate the suffering of the Palestinian people in that territory, and indeed outside the borders of this territory, namely, those who are refugees. These humanitarian workers provide crucial services to successive generations of Palestinians who have known no other fate than the occupation and its nefarious practices. We particularly thank the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which, for a long time now, has provided services to millions of Palestinian refugees.

I call upon all current stakeholders concerend to work to overcome the financial crisis facing UNRWA via the options put forward by the Secretary-General in his report. Mitigating the suffering of the Palestinians under the boot of occupation is the very least that the international community should and could do currently. It would be a key step forward towards a definitive solution of the question, and failing to do so would have a very adverse impact.

In the past, some have tried to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people through partial solutions, which is how they have tried to heal the wounds, but this has essentially been a cover for preserving the status quo. An attempt to preserve things as they currently stand will only have the impact of leading to greater division, discord and deterioration of the relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, and it will also lead to the further embedding of a de facto situation that jeopardizes a bright future for both parties, including the Palestinians. The right to live in safety is the right of all peoples in the region, including, we acknowledge, the right of the Israelis to live in peace within their duly agreed borders and in the

framework of a policy of good-neighbourliness with the States in the region, particularly the Arab States, which are Israel's neighbours.

But I am sure that members of the Council will also agree with me that the equality of rights of all peoples is the bedrock of justice and stability. All must enjoy full equality. It is impossible to imagine peace, security and prosperity being enjoyed by these people as long as the suffering of the Palestinian people continues.

A reduction in the levels of violence, which are very high in this conflict, even when compared with other conflicts in the region, means grappling with the importance of the Palestinian issue, really giving it is just due and understanding the risks that surround it. But those who believe that the Palestinian question is any way lesser than other conflicts in the region are mistaken in that belief. We believe that dealing with the Palestinian question is vital for the freedom of millions of people around the world, including in particular people in the region. It would also be upholding justice as it is truly to be seen on the global stage.

The injustices meted out for so long now against the Palestinian people are evidence of a most deeply rooted crisis and point to dysfunction in terms of the delivery of justice in this region. We must always keep this background in mind and remember that this has been the truth for some time now, as the Palestinian people have aspired to freedom and liberty for so long, having been forced out of their homes, faced with destruction, forced to live as prisoners, blockaded and separated from one another physically, given that their territory is physically divided between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which has become a ticking time bomb. We must bear in the mind the successive generations for whom this has been the plight, who have been imprisoned in this way throughout their lives without any political solution in sight that might allow them to dare to hope for a brighter future.

I do not want to touch upon, or give any weight to, the jumble of facts that we heard in today's meeting during the intervention by one of the speakers. That speaker ignored the injustice endured by the Palestinians and the seizure of their land during the period from 1948 to 1967, and even before the capture of the West Bank and Jerusalem. He also ignored the global movement that President Nasser led against colonialism all over the world, especially in Africa and in the Arab World.

We are not here to discuss historical facts full of conflicts. I am deeply surprised that the speaker ignored the fact that Egypt was the first country to conclude a peace treaty with Israel. I am also surprised at his boldness in justifying the occupation of others' land by force and at his support for the ongoing forced deportation, demolition of houses and crimes against humanity committed by Israel against Palestinians for decades. Regrettably, that extremist approach for justifying crimes is in itself capable of rekindling conflicts once again, despite all efforts towards peace.

The historic appeal launched by the Arab States remains the best proof that we are commited to the principles of peace as upheld by the international community, and we see it as the basis for ending the conflict and ushering in a land of peace. The most recent Arab League Summit reiterated the determination of the Heads of State and Government in the region to stand behind the Arab Peace Initiative, as they marked the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territory.

We would like to reiterate our congratulations to the United States Government for its determination to find a lasting solution to this issue. Egypt will support those to forge contacts with Israeli and Palestinian partners so that this laudable goal may be achieved.

Finally, it is high time for those who have a stake in this conflict to understand that the Israeli and Palestinian peoples share a common destiny and a common future, as they live side by side. The aspirations of the two peoples are for peace and security, and those aspirations can be met only by accepting the reality that the two peoples are neighbours and that they must therefore live side by side and coexist as two independent States living in peace — an Israeli State and a Palestinian State, whose capital would be Al-Quds Al-Sharif — on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank all the briefers for their contributions to today's debate.

Before delivering my statement, I wish to condemn in the strongest terms last Friday's terror attack in Jerusalem and the murder of the Israeli police officer Hadas Malka. We wish to extend our sympathy to the victims of the attack and to their families.

Fifty years have passed since the 1967 war. There must be no room for fatalism or resignation. On the country, this anniversary must reinforce our

collective resolve to work for a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians. Regardless of the length of the historical controversy or the complexity of the geopolitical situation, where there is a will there is a way. We are encouraged by the level of engagement that the United States Administration is showing on the Middle East peace process, and we support its efforts. Any new approach that can lead to a just and lasting peace will be welcome, and Italy will contribute to it as long as it remains within the Oslo framework and is aimed at a two-State solution, which in our view is the only achievable possibility.

Although we maintain that peace must ultimately be attained through direct negotiations between the parties, we believe that the support of other actors is also of paramount importance. I refer in particular to the role of the Middle East Quartet, which has the ability to contribute effectively to creating new momentum for the peace process. In that regard, I should stress that the European Union, as a member of the Quartet, continues to consider the peace process one of its top priorities. Similarly, a credible path towards peace requires the direct involvement of the main Arab partners, which recently reaffirmed the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a strategic tool in helping to achieve peace between Israel and Palestine and bring about a future of cooperation and prosperity for the entire Middle East. Besides that, intensifying and accelerating those international diplomatic efforts is an integral aspect of resolution 2334 (2016), about which we have just received the second quarterly report of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

The resolution is very clear on violence. There is no justification whatever for any acts of violence or terror of any kind by anyone, nor for any incitement to such violence. All those in charge have a fundamental obligation to take a clear stance against any kind of violence, take all possible measures to prevent and end such violence or incitement to it and firmly condemn any attacks and their perpetrators. Provocations and inflammatory rhetoric should also be avoided by all concerned. With regard to settlements, we continue to believe that they are an obstacle to a two-State solution and that they give rise to further tensions and do not contribute to achieving peace.

Any diplomatic initiative relies on solid partners and their willingness to make bold decisions. That is why we support Palestine's President Mahmoud Abbas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian leadership, which has the responsibility to engage constructively in order to advance peace negotiations. It is time for the Palestinian Authority to retake control of the Gaza Strip, where living conditions have deteriorated dramatically thanks to years of neglect, political clashes and conflict. In the process of restoring the whole of Palestine under a single democratic and legitimate authority, it is absolutely essential to ensure that the humanitarian imperative is taken into account.

In the light of that complicated environment, I would like to express Italy's deep appreciation for the hard work that has lately been done by the Special Coordinator and his staff, and by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and all United Nations entities in the region in general. I would once again like to stress the invaluable contribution that the United Nations has made to the lives of Palestinians in the region and to the security of Israel itself. In that spirit, we encourage all United Nations agencies operating in the area to further strengthen the vetting and accountability mechanisms relating to their own employees.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that the two-State vision remains the only achievable goal that can bring this long conflict to an end and the only one that will help the international community rally for the stabilization of the entire Middle East.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Like others, Mr. President, the Senegalese delegation would like to thank you for organizing today's monthly briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and in particular for producing the concept note that has helped us to focus our discussion this morning. I would also like to thank today's briefers — Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General; Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, member of The Elders — and to acknowledge the participation of Mr. Michael Doran of the Hudson Institute. The information they have given us sheds light on the enormous challenges that, sadly, are still to be overcome if we are to put the Middle East peace process back on track.

Seventy years after the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II) and 50 years after the occupation of the Palestinian territories began, we are

dealing with two entities in the Middle East. On the one hand we have a democratic and prosperous Israeli State, as the resolution envisaged, and on the other the people of Palestine, who are still seeking the fulfilment of their legitimate aspirations for an independent and viable State. Because the tensions have been exacerbated by the lack of tangible progress in the political process and the reality on the ground, we should recall Mr. Mladenov's report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), to the effect that the international community, and the Security Council first and foremost, has no alternative but to redouble its perseverance and creativity on the issue if we are to achieve a two-State solution. What is at stake is not only ensuring international peace and security but also enabling the forces of moderation to triumph in a context where extremism and terrorism are in the ascendant. We believe that an Israeli-Arab peace could be a powerful antidote to the plague of violent extremism and terrorism that is devastating the region and spilling over well beyond it. I would therefore like to reiterate our call to the parties to work resolutely on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are threatening the possibility of a two-State solution. That is why there must be an end to the occupation and incitements to hatred and violence, wherever they originate, whoever are their perpetrators and whatever their motives. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of Israeli and Palestinian civil society aimed at building greater understanding between their peoples at a grass-roots level, with a view to using innovative ideas to contribute to the only valid solution, which is a two-State solution.

With regard to the explosive and intolerable situation in Gaza, including the persistent electricity problem, which affects 2 million people, half of them children, we urge the Palestinian political stakeholders to work to find a definitive solution with the help of the parties concerned. In an area that is already dealing with extraordinarily difficult humanitarian and socioeconomic issues, a lasting settlement of Gaza's infrastructure problems of water, sanitation and electricity must be achieved. We reiterate our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is continuing its vital work, particularly in the areas of education and health, for more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. We also call on the international community to urgently provide sufficient, predictable and ongoing financing to UNRWA.

The diplomatic initiatives undertaken by several countries — such as France, Egypt, Jordan and the Russian Federation — have now been joined by the efforts currently being made by the United States.

In Senegal's opinion, the reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative at the most recent Summit of the League of Arab States was a considerable step forward. Senegal strongly encourages and supports all such initiatives.

Along the same lines, the forum marking 50 years of occupation that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is planning to organize in New York from 29 and 30 June is part of the efforts to achieve greater understanding among the parties and a peaceful negotiated political solution to this dispute.

In conclusion, I call on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to redouble its efforts with a view to returning to the spirit of the partition plan so that, like the Israelis, the Palestinians will also have a viable and sovereign State, on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of League of Arab States, Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit; the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov; Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, member of The Elders; and Mr. Michael Doran, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, for their briefings. The picture they have painted of the situation in both Israel and Palestine, and throughout the region, is very bleak.

In a regional environment marked by numerous and deadly crises, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands out for its longevity and its structural aspects. Beginning with its longevity, a few months from now we will commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the partition plan adopted by General Assembly via resolution 181 (II), which was immediately followed by the first Israeli-Arab war. This month is also the fiftieth anniversary of the June 1967 war and the occupation of the Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem, which came in its wake. We must not view this moment as a simple moment of remembrance or as an exercise in resignation, but rather it should compel us to look to the future and to breathe new life into our endeavours.

That is particularly true because the second hallmark of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is its structure. The lack of a solution to the conflict, which

is serious in and of itself, is also an ongoing threat to international security. As a result of the very serious nature of the conflict, its symbolic aspect and the place it has taken in the collective imagination, the scope of this unresolved conflict is structural and goes well beyond the territory of Israel and Palestine. Any escalation in the conflict risks destabilizing the region uncontrollably. That is why we cannot resign ourselves to a fake status quo, which conceals daily erosion on the ground and of the spirit. The goal of this path is clear: to put an end to the two-State solution as being a mirage in the desert, which would be a leap into the unknown and into the risk of a worse situation.

I believe we all share the view that the current painful situation has gone on for too long. It has gone on for too long for the Palestinians, who, for too long, have been deprived of their legitimate right to pursue statehood as a result of the occupation and see that prospect slipping further from their grasp and disappearing with the expansion of the settlement policy. The announcements at the beginning of the month of nearly 3,000 new housing units built in the Israeli settlements in the West Bank are part of a worrying trend and represent an increase of 70 per cent in settlement construction this year, as compared with last year, according to figures just published by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. With nearly 600,000 settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, we are reaching the point of no return and we are faced with the question of the possibility of the two-State solution slipping away, without another viable solution. We must remember that the occupation is illegal under international law and makes achieving peace impossible.

This situation has gone on too long for the Israelis as well, because the prospects for a never-ending pursuit of occupation and colonization contradicts the democratic foundations of the State of Israel, because the full regional integration of Israel into the wider region is possible only once peace has been reached with the Palestinians and because violence flourishes in the void presented by the dearth of a political solution.

The attack that took place on Friday in Jerusalem, which claimed the life of a young female member of the Israeli police force and which France robustly condemned, is another tragic example of my point. The waves of violence that follow one after another, especially in Jerusalem, serve only to harden mutual defiance.

Yet, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now the oldest of the conflicts that are ripping the Middle East apart, it is also the only one whose solution is known and widely shared within the international community. Despite the constant deterioration of the situation on the ground, the parameters of a future agreement have not changed: two States living in peace and security with contiguous, secure and recognized borders drawn on the basis of the 1967 demarcation lines and mutually agreed land swaps; with Jerusalem as the capital of both States; and with an agreed, realistic, just and equitable solution for Palestinian refugees.

There is no viable alternative to the two-State solution, neither for the Israelis nor for the Palestinians. The past 50 years have taught that the fates of these two peoples are intertwined, and that no one can sustainably fulfil their national aspirations by denying those of the other side.

Finally, I wish once again to publicly express France's concerns about the situation in the Gaza Strip. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in which this territory is entrenched has been aggravated by the blocking of the electricity supply, which has lasted for about two months. The inhabitants of Gaza today live with an average of two to four hours of electricity per day, and the energy crisis has serious consequences for the medical, sanitation and water treatment infrastructure facilities in particular. We must therefore take action to improve the situation in Gaza, particularly at the humanitarian level. All stakeholders must take responsibility to ensure that a lasting solution can be found in and for Gaza. This is urgent. If nothing is done, the ongoing tensions could lead to a new deadly conflict, like those that the Gaza Strip experienced three times in the past nine years. We cannot allow that to happen. Israel must therefore fulfil its responsibilities by alleviating the restrictions it imposes on the access to goods and people into and out of Gaza, which should be the precursor to a lifting of the blockade and which must be accompanied by robust security guarantees. It is also crucial that the Palestinians reach a reconciliation agreement, as we know that there will be no viable Palestinian State without Palestinian unity on the basis of the two-State solution.

France is a friend of both Palestinians and Israelis. That is why it can speak to them truthfully and repeatedly call on them to return to the negotiating table, and that is why my country will never give up.

We will continue to act in furtherance of that goal with our main partners.

In the region, the Arab Peace Initiative remains the essential framework for making peace with the Palestinians the first step towards the regional integration of Israel. We hope that the commitment of the United States Administration, through its renewed diplomatic effort, will help to restart the negotiation proces between Israelis and Palestinians. With our European Union partners, we stand ready to help the parties resume negotiations.

Fifty years of occupation means two successive generations of Palestinians and Israelis who have lived through the current conflict. The situation is both physically and psychologically devastating. It is time to put an end to it.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Let me thank all the briefers for their valuable insights.

Year after year, members of the Security Council attest to the grim reality of a seemingly perpetual deadlock in the Middle East peace process. The composition of the Council changes, but the messages and signals heard around the table remain basically the same, amid little change in the overall situation. The reasons for this state of affairs are well known, so there is no need to turn to the name-and-shame game again. The recipe for breaking the stalemate is also known. Each side knows what exact steps are expected of them.

Yet again, we have to signal our strong concern about the continuous recurrence of violence. The terrorist attack that was thwarted on 16 June near the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem is a clear reminder of the very dangerous situation that we are currently facing. We condemn all manifestations of terrorism and praise the professionalism of the police forces that did not allow civilians to be hurt.

Time and again, the international community hears declarations of goodwill and readiness to explore peace options. However, what is missing is the follow-up to those declarations in the form of concrete actions. All available venues and opportunities must be exhaustively explored and attempted with a view to achieving greater security for Israel and Arab States.

We continue to believe that the Middle East peace process can and will be successful. The principle of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting in peace and security, remains valid despite well-known difficulties in overcoming the deadlock, where it happens to be at the moment.

We are certainly quite far from that goal. The parties have a long road ahead before they find a way to resolve the conflict. However, the good news is that for the last two months we have seen a number of high-profile visits to Israel and the Arab world. We hope that the groundwork that has been laid recently will provide the necessary impetus to restart the negotiation process. The key is for the parties to correctly interpret that message and seize the opportunity. One thing to avoid, however, is setting conditions and waiting for the other side to make unilateral concessions. Moves to reinvigorate the political track will have to be reciprocal.

In that context, we welcome the meeting held between top Palestinian and Israeli officials, during which the two sides agreed on a number of measures to improve the economic situation in the Palestinian territories, to enable more Palestinian development in Area C, to adjust Israeli enforcement policies and to expand the working hours of the Israeli-controlled Allenby Bridge border crossing between Jordan and the West Bank. Such steps benefit both parties, as they improve the atmosphere to facilitate the renewal of negotiations. We highly appreciate the renewed efforts of the United States to bring them together.

While we applaud those measures, we must not overlook the importance of focusing on a political solution. Otherwise, if the sides continue to dig in their entrenched positions, we will witness the repetition of the past five decades. It is hardly anybody's wish to see, in 50 years, in the Chamber, a repeat of today's meeting, albeit with different participants. To avoid such a scenario, we reiterate that the way forward lies in elaborating a workable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement built on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, the Quartet road map and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit and Mr. Michael Doran for sharing their insights and perspectives. They all spoke with passion — and rightly so — and their briefings were very useful. I am very appreciative.

We understand that there is one historic fact, as many have already mentioned, that gives context to

the briefing on the Middle East this month — that June 2017 marks 50 years since the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, with all of its implications. There is no doubt that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been one of the disputes at the core of the dangerous situation that essentially has defined the Middle East region for the past several decades

Today's meeting provides the Council an opportunity to reflect on efforts that have been made thus far and renew its commitment to helping to resolve this long-standing dispute. The Council and the international community cannot claim to have done enough in that regard. We have all failed.

For what it is worth, Ethiopia's position has been very clear — we fully support the goal of two States living side-by-side in peace and security as the only viable option to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Unfortunately, peace has so far remained elusive, to the detriment of Israelis and Palestinians, as well as to the peace and stability of the Middle East region. Actions of both sides that run counter to the achievement of a negotiated peace have not only continued to increase frustration and mistrust but also undermine the very viability of the two-State solution.

We know full well that ultimately it is up to the two parties to achieve peace and resolve the conflict. It is therefore absolutely imperative that the two sides resume direct and meaningful negotiations in order to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution on the basis of mutual respect and the spirit of compromise that ensures Israel's security and Palestinian aspirations for Statehood. We believe the Council has a duty and responsibility to support and encourage that process with a view to ensuring the viability of the two-State solution and the achievement of lasting peace. The loss of the opportunity to realize the two-State solution would be a tragedy of historic proportions. The Council has the responsibility to make sure that does not happen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

I wish to thank the briefers for their presentations, including Mr. Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General. I also welcome to today's meeting Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, member of The Elders, the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, as well as Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča.

Bolivia reaffirms its support of the self-determination of the Palestinian people and its right to a free, sovereign and independent State within the pre-1967 internationally recognized borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Bolivia is constitutionally a pacifist State that promotes the right of peoples to cultivate and achieve peace as well as cooperation among the peoples of the world, and, in the most strident terms, condemns all forms wars of aggression as means of reolving disputes and conflicts between States. In that vein, we believe that the sole alternative for ensuring a just and lasting peace with regard to the conflict between Israel and Palestine is through direct negotiations, using the existing mechanisms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in compliance with the Organization's own resolutions.

Bolivia would like to take this opportunity to recall that, on 22 of November 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 242 (1967). The resolution states that one of the fundamental principles for achieving peace in the Middle East is the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from the territories they have occupied since that time. Similarly, we would like to highlight that there have been various initiatives in recent years to try to resolve the situation through dialogue: the Camp David talks, led by then-President of the United States Jimmy Carter in 1978, the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, advanced by the League of Arab States, and, in 2003, the Quartet, made up of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, drafted the road map, which laid the foundation for negotiations between Israel and Palestine and the recognition of the Palestinian State.

The issue, however, is not of a purely bilateral nature. The entire international community has voiced an opinion on this subject. In that regard, I would like to join the Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in what they expressed in the declaration of the seventeenth Summit of Heads and State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on the Island of Margarita, just a few months ago. I would like to recall that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries brings together approximately

two thirds of the international community. This is a topic that does not only concern the Security Council but, as I said, the entire international community.

Allow me to read out the relevant paragraphs from the declaration.

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Heads of State or Government express their hope for genuine, rapid progress to be made to resolve the final status issues regarding the question of Palestine, namely, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security, water and prisoners, underscoring that the just resolution of all of these issues is imperative for conclusion of a comprehensive and final peace agreement. They call for international efforts to support peace initiatives to overcome the obstacles that have repeatedly caused the failure of negotiations, stressing in this regard their grave concern about the critical political, economic, social, humanitarian and security situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of ongoing unlawful policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power, as well as the negative impact on peace efforts. They express grave concern in particular at the dramatic deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip due to the Israeli military aggression in July and August 2014, which caused widespread human trauma and destruction amounting to a humanitarian disaster.
>
> "The Heads of State or Government condemn Israel's continuing military occupation of the Palestinian territory in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions. They condemn the continuing brutal Israeli military campaign against the defenceless Palestinian people, by which the occupying Power has continued to commit grave human rights violations and reported war crimes, including by use of excessive, indiscriminate force that over the years has killed and injured thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, and has caused vast destruction of properties, infrastructure and agricultural lands. They also condemn illegal Israeli settlement activities, by which the occupying Power has continued to colonize the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to forcibly displace Palestinian civilians, in grave breach of international law. They further condemn the provocations and incitement by groups of extremist settlers, including against the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem and the vandalization of mosques and churches, which are fuelling tensions and religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization. They also condemn Israel's imposition of collective punishment on the Palestinian people by various illegal measures, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which has been subjected to an illegal Israeli blockade since 2007. The Heads of State or Government reiterate their demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease all such violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, and fully abide by its legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention.
>
> "The Heads of State or Government stress the incompatibility of peace negotiations with Israeli colonization activities and demand an immediate cessation and reversal of all such illegal activities. They express deep concern about the extensive physical, economic and social devastation being caused by the Israeli settlements, wall and network of checkpoints,which are severing the Palestinian territory into separate areas, including several walled cantons, isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the territory, forcibly displacing thousands of Palestinians from their homes, including many Bedouin families, particularly in the Jordan Valley, and completely destroying some communities. They stress that such actions gravely undermine the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the occupied Palestinian territory and jeopardize the prospects for physically achieving the two-State solution for peace on the basis of the 1967 borders. They recall, in this regard, the United Nations Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and call for the speedy fulfilment of its mandate in order to redress the losses and suffering being endured by the Palestinian people as a result of the wall."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

This is a matter of global importance and is at the heart of the serious situation that the Middle East is experiencing. Bolivia believes it an inescapable duty to recall that for 50 years — half a century — a systematic occupation has been deployed in violation of international law. This meeting must be scene through

two prisms. First, it must first be seen as a call for peace and as support for all peace initiatives. Secondly, it must be seen as recognizing that, for 50 years — if we are talking just about the occupation — there has been a collective failure on the part of the Security Council and the international community, during which time we have failed more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. Today is the International Day of Refugees. Those children who arrived in the first refugee camps 50 years ago have seen their children and grandchildren born as refugees. The past 50 years have been marked by the failure of the international community because the Palestinian situation, the occupation and the sped-up construction of settlements show how we have acted according to double standards. In practice, there are resolutions that are not being complied with and about which we do not want to talk. It is a 50-year collective failure because, today, in this very Chamber, we have been alerted to the fact that we are on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. And there is a silence of complicity in the shadow of the impending tragedy.

It is a 50-year failure on the part of the Security Council because the construction of settlements has not only not ceased, but has increased, and our resolutions, including the latest recently adopted by the Security Council (resolution 2334 (2016)), have had no effect. For 50 years we have failed the Palestinian as well as the Israeli people because, without any doubt, both peoples want to live in peace and security. For 50 years the international community has similarly failed itself because we have not been able to comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.